

GREENWorks

Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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While socially distant, stay close to the environment

Staying at home and reducing contact with others is a top priority for protecting public health during this pandemic, but that doesn't mean we can't do our part to protect our environment, especially during as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day (April 22, 2020). Daily routines and habits have been upended during this time, and some things – like bringing your reusable bags to the grocery store – have been put on hold. Here are some things you can do to stay environmentally friendly throughout social distancing:

- **DIY face masks:** Make face masks out of old fabric, T-shirts or bandanas. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides [sew and no-sew tutorials](#) on how to make your own mask at home.
- **Roadside cleanups:** Plan a socially distant roadside clean-up in your neighborhood. Make sure to check with their local transfer station to see if they are accepting roadside clean-up waste. Many towns have set aside April 25 as the day to do clean-ups. Some musts:
 - Gloves (both latex and work).
 - Grabbers are great if you have them.
 - Wear closed-toe shoes.
 - Keep social distancing if you are cleaning up “with” neighbors.
 - Be mindful of things that “don't look right” – bottles that are misshapen/hissing.
 - Have adults supervise.
- **Know what's flushable:** Don't flush anything but the three P's: pee, poop and [toilet] paper. Flushing paper towels, wipes (even “flushable” wipes), tissues or feminine hygiene products can lead to serious septic system or wastewater treatment problems. Learn more about [what's flushable](#) and what isn't, and check out some more tips on [how to be septic smart at home](#).
- **Reduce food waste:** Waste less food by using what's already in your fridge or pantry. Several websites and smart phone apps make it easy to find recipes based on what ingredients you have at home.
- **Does it spark joy?** Get a head start on spring cleaning! If possible, recycle or donate items, or set items aside to donate when stores reopen. In addition, [reduce the junk mail](#) you receive and other paper waste by unsubscribing to print newspapers and magazines and switching to electronic versions.
- **Reduce your appliance reliance:** Conserve water and protect your septic system by only washing clothes and running the dishwasher when you have full loads. Be mindful of large water uses, and stagger the use of water-generating appliances, such as washing machines, showers and dishwashers.

- **Paper over plastic:** With reusable grocery bags temporarily not being accepted at stores, either request paper or make sure to save the plastic bags to be recycled at stores or transfer stations where that service is available.
- **Scoop the poop:** If you take walks during the day, be sure to follow appropriate social distancing guidelines and don't forget to pick up your pet's waste. Pet waste that gets into water runoff can lead to potentially toxic algae outbreaks that can harm marine life, humans and other animals. Here are some [more tips on how to make sure your furry friends are environmentally friendly](#).
- **Share something:** Spice up your walks or bike rides by taking pictures of what you love about New Hampshire for the crowd-sourced [#ThisIsNH photo story map](#) for a chance to be featured on NHDES' social media pages!
- **Burn wood:** Remember, it is illegal to burn trash or treated wood in New Hampshire, in open fires as well as in fireplaces, woodstoves, chimineas, burn barrels and the like. View this [NHDES fact sheet](#) to learn more about open burning. Local or state fire permits may be required. Check with your local fire department or look to the state's [Online Permitting System](#) for more information.
- **Document it:** Shake up your daily routine and accept the [#OneThing4Earth Challenge](#) by showing NHDES a video or photo of what you're doing to help the planet this Earth Day (April 22, 2020)! Don't forget to challenge your friends, family and coworkers, and tag NHDES on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) and use the hashtag #OneThing4Earth.

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